



**U.S. Department of
Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

Assistant Secretary

1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

January 17, 2008

The Honorable Bill Nelson
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Nelson:

Thank you for your letter of January 9, co-signed by Senator Martinez, supporting US Airways to serve Pensacola in the ongoing slot-exemption proceeding at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA). The Secretary has asked that I respond to your letter directly.

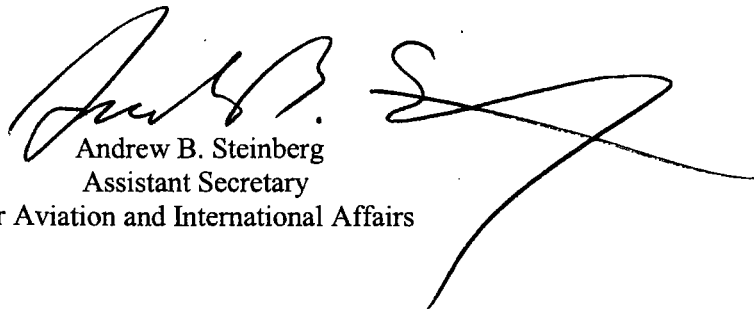
As you know, the U.S. Department of Transportation commenced a slot exemption proceeding on November 26 to re-allocate four slot exemptions that were returned to the Department by ATA Airlines, Inc. (ATA) on November 28. ATA had been using these four slot exemptions for DCA – Midway International Airport (MDW) service. These slot exemptions may be used to serve any medium hub or smaller airport, but it must be within the 1,250-mile perimeter of DCA. In response to the Department's request for applications, the Department received proposals from a total of five airlines to serve seven communities.

As the slot exemption proceeding is competitive and is currently under review by the Department, I am sure you understand that I cannot comment on the merits of the proposals. I assure you, however, that the Department will fully consider all of the proposals, and make its award based on the selection criteria detailed in the governing statutes.

As is our normal practice, I am placing a copy of your letter and my response in Docket DOT-OST-2000-7182 as a contact outside the record of this proceeding. An identical letter has been sent to Senator Martinez.

I appreciate your interest in this slot exemption proceeding. If I can provide further information or assistance, please feel free to call me.

Sincerely,



Andrew B. Steinberg
Assistant Secretary
for Aviation and International Affairs

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DOCKETS

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

January 9, 2008

Secretary Mary E. Peters
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, District of Columbia 20590

Dear Secretary Peters:

We are writing today to express our strong support for US Airways' request to provide service from the Pensacola Regional Airport to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport under the Department's slot exemption proceeding Docket DOT-OST-2000-1782-1505.

Pensacola Regional Airport is the largest airport in the region stretching over 400 miles from New Orleans to the west and Jacksonville to the east. Due to the region's defense and homeland security presence, Pensacola has seen a 51 percent increase in air travel between Pensacola and the Washington area.

Northwest Florida includes Eglin Air Force Base -- the largest base in the country -- Headquarters for the Air Force's Special Operation Command at Hurlburt Field, Pensacola Naval Air Station and Whiting Field. Currently, the total number of active duty military and federal employees in the Pensacola region is over 20,000, and with BRAC these gains will result in more than 5,000 new people moving to the area. Also, numerous defense and aerospace contractors have a significant presence in the both the Pensacola and Washington areas such as General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, ARINC, BAE Systems and Raytheon.

Eliminating the need for a connection to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport or a drive to a different originating airport will reduce time, cost and inconvenience for military personnel, residents and tourists. In addition, we urge you to take into account the need for non-stop service as well as the economic and public benefits approval of the application would provide to Northwest Florida and Southern Alabama.

Thank you for your timely consideration of this application.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson

Bill Marling